

## The Times' Daily Short Story.

### WHEN SHORTY'S CHANCE CAME

(Copyright, 1902, by C. B. Lewis.)

Around Fulton market and all along Front street they knew Shorty O'Higgins. His given name was John, but as he was a trifle less than five feet high he was always called Shorty.

There was only one thing to console Shorty in his struggles to keep a dun-garee suit of clothes on his back and prevent hunger from gnawing at his vitals. He couldn't sing, play the fiddle or dance a hornpipe, but he could sneeze. The fame of Shorty's sneeze extended clear down to the Battery and up to the Brooklyn bridge. It had been heard up Wall street as far as Exchange place. It was a sneeze peculiarly his own, and no one could rob him of it or produce a successful imitation. That sneeze didn't come under the head of "promptness and dispatch." It was all of ten minutes from the time his nose began to tickle until the explosion came. Explosion was the term for it. When the sneeze finally came it lifted Shorty's cap off his head, rent new holes in his shoes and started the cobblestones in the street from their sandy foundations.

One day Shorty picked up a bit of news and was at once interested. No one could remember when he had been interested in anything before. The Cubans had suddenly braced up, and snuffed into the Spaniards with new vigor, and the junta had raised a large sum of money in the States to send over a cargo of war material. Shorty learned what craft would take the cargo and her date of sailing, and it came about that he was included in the crew, though the mate bestowed a kick upon him as an "N. G." almost before the ropes were clear of the snubbing posts. The craft went south to make a start from a Florida port, and in due time the muttons were on the rolling deep.

History is silent as to why the mate got down on Shorty and worked up his old iron on him. Perhaps it was on account of the size of his feet or the squint of his eyes. Steamship mates are rather eccentric in their likes and dislikes. No matter what the basis, Shorty was selected as the man to be bounced about, and bounced he was. The filibuster craft was delayed at sea by accident, and again she was chased off the Cuban coast by a Spanish gunboat, and the mate had five or six days in which to make it plain to Shorty that he was not beloved.

The steamer at length headed in for the appointed rendezvous, but when ten miles off the shore two things happened. A gunboat was sighted bearing down on her, and darkness had scarcely come when a thick fog settled down with it. Shorty wasn't to blame for either the gunboat or the fog, but the mate swore that he was and gave him some more of the same old tonic.

No living man had ever heard Shorty

O'Higgins utter threats of vengeance; no one had ever known of his striking back. Had the fish dealers of Fulton market been told that he thirsted for revenge after that last bouncing about they would have stood amazed. Nevertheless, such was the case. Yes, the world had turned at last and if the mate had been a mind reader he would have hastened to take off his cap and apologize.

The filibuster had reefs to look out for and an intricate channel to thread. As the fog came down she had to grope. A little later she came to a standstill. The Spaniard came up to within half a mile of her and began to play her search light. No good. Then she crept forward, fathom by fathom, with her crew at the guns.

The order had been "lights out" and no talking about the filibuster. Everything that could creak and groan was lashed fast, and such men as were forced to move about removed their shoes. The pall was so thick that a man standing amidstships could not see stem or stern. The bare crunched in her form while the bound hunted to and fro. Presently, as the ocean was as quiet as a graveyard, Shorty found himself beside the mate. The mate wasn't thinking of bouncing anybody just then, but Shorty was reviewing the past. He reviewed for five minutes and then whispered in the mate's ear:

"Mr. Davis, I'm goin' to sneeze."

"If you do, I'll throttle you!" replied the mate as he turned on him.

"Mr. Davis, I'm goin' to sneeze, and you can get ready to go to the bottom of the sea and be hanged to you!"

The mate had heard of "the Shorty sneeze," and even as he reached out to grasp the originator and sole proprietor by the throat and choke him into a state of limpsness he turned pale and his heart pounded his ribs. He failed to get to Shorty's neck in time. The sneeze came, and it was a sneeze that would have set 500 pedestrians along Front street wondering what tug had exploded her boilers. They could have heard it aboard the gunboat had she been four times as far away. There was a prompt halt in reply, and then, as the filibuster captain ripped out an oath and the mate drew his leg back for a kick, the Spaniard let go with his port battery and three big shells crashed into the steamer. A minute later she was a sinking wreck and taking half of her thirty-six men to the bottom of the sea with her.

Next day at noon Shorty O'Higgins was swept ashore on a bit of wreckage. He crawled up on the beach and fell down and slept the sleep of exhaustion. Ten hours later he woke up to find a dozen long haired, wild eyed men grouped about him.

"The steamer and the cargo—where are they?" was asked.

"Under twenty fathoms of the blue," he answered.

"But why so? How was it?"

"Oh, I sneezed and sent 'em there!"

M. QUAD.

### CLUB OF FISH EATERS.

Members of Illinois Society to Eat Meat From Finny Tribe Only. Boston, beware!

The center of learning and brains will shortly be transferred from the Hub to Melrose Park, Ill., where protuberant foreheads, shaped like Bartlett pears, will soon be the rule, says the Chicago Inter Ocean.

And on what meat will these Melrose Park neighbors live that they will have grown so brainy?

Brain food, of course; fish and nothing but fish.

Great thinkers and leaders will be as common as Mary and Ann gins when the new diet gets in its first work. Goldfish diet is expected to produce Napoleons of finance, future Grants will live exclusively on swordfish, aspiring young clergymen will dine on whale, stockbrokers on snickers, coming great critics on carp, and an abundance of cod is regarded as certain to produce a codfish aristocracy.

This is the programme outlined by the newly formed Fish club of Melrose Park, the members of which organization have pledged themselves to eat no meat except that from the finny tribe. The idea of forming such a club suggested itself to Mrs. Joseph M. Goodman when she drew a bowl of goldfish in a raffle at the Sacred Heart fair. The club was recently organized with twenty-three members who met at Mrs. Goodman's home. The name of some fish was assigned to each member, and after cards a fish luncheon was served.

In former years Melrose Park society had a "rooster club" and a "pig club," the members of each being pledged to eat only the meat of the animals denoted by the club name. More than a thousand letters were sent to these clubs criticizing their diet. These previous clubs partly suggested the Fish club. Meanwhile various members of Melrose Park society are busily engaged to get into the swim with the Fish club before they "get the mackerel eye."

### A River's Discharge.

The discharge of a river is the volume of water it pours into the sea within a given time, usually expressed as so many feet per second. It is estimated by finding the breadth, the average depth and the average rate of a river at its mouth and multiplying.

### London Tenements.

While one room tenements in London have decreased from 172,502 to 149,524, or 14 per cent, two room, three room and four room tenements have increased 16 per cent, 18 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively.

## THE POST OFFICE AND THE PEOPLE

Details of American System Described by M. G. Cuniff.

### HOW THE MACHINE IS REGULATED

Congress the Governing Power—Ancient Methods Still Obtain—Effect of Its Shortcomings on the Public. How Our System Compares With That of Foreign Countries.

The World's Work for November contains the first of a series of articles by M. G. Cuniff on the American postal system. Prefacing his article, Mr. Cuniff states that it is his purpose "to tell the facts about our post office, with the hope of arousing interest in the department of the government's business which most nearly touches every citizen; to lead to a realization of its shortcomings and to help to secure improvements which will put the United States post office service on a par with the service of other civilized lands."

The following is taken from Mr. Cuniff's article:

I asked Postmaster General Payne how, in his opinion, the United States post office compares in efficiency with private business organizations and with foreign post offices.

"How do I know?" said he. "I've been postmaster general only a year."

An assistant postmaster general, once invited to address a convention of postmasters, jokingly replied, so runs the story:

"I cannot go. I couldn't tell you anything anyway. What do I know about the postal business?"

Said another assistant postmaster general:

"If a man attends closely to his work he can learn to manage one of these departments in about four years. Then he goes out and another pupil comes in—the chances are, a politician. A business? Why, it's simply a training school!"

These three remarks do not argue that the speakers were regarded even in cynical Washington as poor officials. Indeed the two assistants were quite the reverse. But inquiring into the workings of the post office it is necessary first to understand the weakness of the system at the top, and here it is.

The postmaster general, however, and his four assistants are not the post office. It was apparent as early as 1804, when there was only one assistant postmaster general, that the political heads of the post office do not belong to the machine. The machine begins with the chief clerks and superintendents and their army of civil service subordinates, who hold their places while administrations come and go and who manage the postmasters, the contracts, the delivery service, the money order system, the inspections. These officials put their initials on executive documents and hand the documents, great piles of them, to the assistant postmasters general, who sign them. It would require omniscience for an assistant postmaster general to know whether he should sign or not. He trusts the initials, a system still in vogue. In brief, the system is one in which the permanent subordinates have every chance to direct all but the most wide awake of their temporary heads—the cart before the horse. The attorney general's office superintends the enforcement of postal laws. A branch of the treasury department audits the accounts, though, unlike all other branches of the government, the post office is its own bank and does not use the treasury for regular banking purposes. But the service of the attorney general's office and of the treasury department is not paid for by the post office. Misfit bits of three departments with separate accounts do the country's postal business.

The machine has grown up, not organically, but by accretions of unrelated departments, under laws passed in 1794. Occasionally a postmaster general has conceived of an improvement in the service. Postmaster General Wamaker tried to reorganize it. There are men in the civil service machine today who know more about post office affairs in their own departments than any outsider could possibly know who would like to make improvements. Why can't they? Simply because the real directors of the post office have been the members of the committee on post offices and post roads in the house of representatives. Congress must necessarily decide the policy of the post office, but it is a bewildering complication of an institution, already complex, to have some of its most powerful quasi officials in a house committee.

Instead of working on business principles the post office machine is governed by a bulky book of laws that has grown from the slim book of 1794 as fast as successive congresses have cared to pass postal bills. Rates of postage are changed, service is rendered, contracts are made under regulations passed by men dead for generations, whose laws were made for a post office which as late as 1873 cost in total expenditures only what it costs now for the single item of railroad transportation. The post office department may recommend until it is weary, and these laws do not budge. Congress—and that means chiefly the house post office committee—says what the post office shall do and shall not do. I once asked a high post office official why he failed to carry out a plan he had to save perhaps the total

amount of the post office deficit on certain contracts. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Why bump one's head against a stone wall?" said he. "Congress won't pass it."

"Every plan that has ever been presented to congress for improving the postal service," said a high post office authority, "has been scrutinized by interests. Do you suppose we can have a revision changing the present rates of paying the railroads as long as some of the most prominent senators and congressmen are identified with transportation interests?"

I turned to another official.

"Do you mean," said I, "that you could not pass a bill obnoxious to interests?"

"Well," he smiled diplomatically, "there would certainly be opposition." Finally there is the civil service system. If a post office official fulfills his routine duties he rises in the service by sheer mechanism. Once in a berth it requires a trial for gross inefficiency or misconduct to get him out. If the misman of an office where there is no spur of self interest to goad a man to effort fails to stifle his progressiveness, sophistication tells him that it is unwise to arouse an interest. "Not too much zeal!" is a watchword in the United States post office. Even if the head of a department wished to have a force as efficient as that demanded by the manager of a business, he could not have it.

Tiny Switzerland has many things to teach us. So have Germany, France and England.

In a German city—take Berlin, for example—there is a post office every few hundred yards. A post office can be found as easily as a cigar store in New York. A network of underground tubes connects all but the very smallest. Ordinary mail goes from station to station by government owned wagons, but a special delivery card or stamp, costing less than 8 cents, will cause a message to be shot by tube anywhere in the city. A messenger will carry it from the point of reception the few necessary yards to the receiver and will wait for an answer.

Message and answer in Berlin take about two hours. This is service far speedier than any in the United States. The German telegraph system is an adjunct of the post office. Telegrams, costing 12 cents for ten words, including address, beat special delivery letters by just the margin between electric and pneumatic transmission. Postal checks for small amounts almost wholly take the place of bank checks. One may send a postal money order with a message written on the back, and a postal messenger will bring it to the house of the receiver and pay it to him on the spot, service as accurate and complete as by personal messenger. Subscription to magazines and newspapers is through the post office. You pay the postmaster, he orders the proper number of publications for his office, and the journals come cheaply and smoothly in bulk to the several stations for delivery. And not only does a parcels post do practically all the German express business at low rates, depending on weight and distance, but Germany, through agreements with other nations, sends parcels around the world. I know a resident of Berlin who has a package of meat mailed to him every Saturday from a point 150 miles away in Silesia for a little more than 12 cents, the rate for a twenty pound parcel. German merchants deliver most of their goods by mail, the small storekeeper thus provided with as good a delivery service as the larger. All the parcels, large and small, are brought of course to the address to which they are directed. Germans have even been permitted to mail eleven pound parcels to addresses in the United States.

In London the pneumatic tube system is so perfected that within the radius of London one may send an ordinary letter, receive an answer, send another and receive an answer to that all in the course of a day. Deliveries run until 9 and 10 o'clock in the evening. The English post office maintains a telegraph system, conveying twelve word messages all over Great Britain and Ireland for 12 cents, and a parcels post system comparable to the German and, furthermore, maintains a savings bank. All this pays. The United States post office fails to give such service and fails to pay even its expenses.

It would be impossible in New York, for example, to send a letter, receive an answer, send again and receive another answer, all in a day, as in London. The pneumatic tube service is very restricted. A letter posted downtown at 4 o'clock will not be delivered uptown in the residence district until the next morning. If packages are too bulky for the ordinary carrier one must journey to the post office for them, and likewise one goes to the post office to cash money orders.

I asked a high post office official why parcels are not delivered.

"The public don't demand it," said he. "They don't object to going to the post office."

Your neighbor may post a four pound package to San Francisco for 64 cents. It would cost him the same to send it to you next door. A German might mail a ten pound package from Germany to Salt Lake City. You could not without paying prohibitory letter postage rates. Mr. James L. Cowles sent a cut case thus from New York directly to New Haven. The stamps cost \$3.68. He could have sent it via Germany for \$1.95. Offered at any post office as fourth class matter, it would not have been accepted at all. It weighed eleven pounds. Practically, then, the United States post office says, "Send all but your smaller packages by slow and uncertain private express, and send all your urgent messages by expensive private telegraph," or put in a telephone.

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### IN BOSTON MARKETS.

Quotations on the Leading Products That Are in Demand.

Boston, Nov. 4.—There is a firm market for butter, but the demand is quiet. Northern creamery, round lots, 23½c; western, 23½c; Vermont dairy, 20½c; renovated butter, 17½c.

There is a steady market for cheese with prices firm as last quoted. Round lots, Vermont twins, 11½c; 11 3-4c; New York twins, 11 3-4c to 12c.

Eggs are steady and unchanged. Western fresh, 28½c; eastern, 29½c; nearby, 34½c to 36c.

Beans are easy, with a quiet movement. Carload lots, pea, \$2.25; 2.30; medium, \$2.25; 2.30; yellow eyes, \$2.25; red kidneys, \$3.40; 3.50; California small white, \$2.60; 2.65; foreign pea and medium, \$2.60; 2.65; jobbing, 5½c to 6c more.

Apples are in full supply and mixed lots are selling slowly at easy prices. Fancy red stock is firm. Maiden's blush, \$2.25; 2.50; Maine pippins, \$1.25; 1.50; Harveys, \$2.25; 2.50; wealthies, \$2.50; 3.00; snows, \$2.50; 3.00; Kings, \$2.50; 3.00; Baldwins, \$1.75; 2.25; greenings, \$1.75; 2.25.

Cranberries are steady at 22½c per box and 20½c to 22c per bbl.

Domestic grapes sell at 15½c per bbl for Concord, 22½c for Niagara, 17½c for Verdelais and 14½c for Catawbas. Almeria grapes are selling at \$3.50 per bbl. California Tokay grapes are quoted at \$1.50; 2.00; Cornish, \$1.75; 2.25.

Chestnuts are in full supply and sell at 60½c per bu.

There is a firm market for potatoes, with a good demand at the recent advance. Arrostook hebrons, 68½c; 70c; Green mountains, 68½c; sweets, Norfolk, cloth heads, \$1.25; 1.50; Jersey, double heads, 20c to 22c.

Native celery is selling at 60½c per doz; bbls, Pascal, \$1 per doz.

Onions are quoted at: Spanish, large cns, \$2.50; natives, 75c per bu; bbls, \$2.25.

Tomatoes are quoted at: Native, per bu, \$2.00; green, 75c per bu.

Cucumbers sell at \$2.68 per bu.

Yellow turnips are selling at 85c per bbl; white French, \$1.50 per bbl; white, 35c per bu; beets, 60c per bu; carrots, 75c per bu; parsnips, 75c per bu.

Marrow squashes are quoted at \$1.00; 1.25 per bbl for native; Bay state, \$1.25 per bbl; turban, \$1.25 per bbl.

Cabbages sell at 35c each for native; Savoy, 75c per bbl; red, 75c per bbl.

Lettuce is quoted at 20½c per bu; bbl; radishes, 50c per bbl; 25c per doz; cress, 25c per doz; leeks, 40c per doz.

String beans sell at \$1.50 for green.

Splach is quoted at 20c per bu; parsley, hothouse, 25c to 40c per bu; peppers, \$1 per pkg.

Lima beans sell at 75c to 82c per bu; egg plant, \$4.50 per crt for native.

Cauliflower is quoted at \$1.25 per bu.

Brussels sprouts sell at 10c per qt; beet greens, 60c per bu.

Pork provisions are easier and many prices are lower. There is but little tendency yet apparent toward increase in market offerings of hogs. The quality is from fair to good, the latter prevailing. Prices were well sustained. There is an easier market for fresh beef, with only a very few choice steers bringing full prices. The arrivals of fresh beef have been almost as usual for local consumption, but the export trade has been almost nothing.

Muttons and lambs are a little firmer.

The market is well cleaned up and somewhat higher prices are predicted.

Veals are selling well. Western fall lambs, 78c; spring lambs, 84c; 85c; yearlings, 60c; wintons, 60c; veals, 90c to 11c.

There is a quiet demand for poultry, with the market fully supplied. Prices are firm. Turkeys, northern, 20c to 22c; western, 17c to 20c; chickens, 15c; western, large, 14c to 15c; medium, 12c to 13c; fowls, northern, 14c to 15c; western, 13c to 14c; ducks, 10c to 12c.

There is a continued heavy supply of hay and prices are only steady: straw is firm; millfeed is firm and unchanged. Hay, No. 1, \$1.80; 1.90; lower grades, \$1.60; 1.70; rye straw, \$2.10; 2.20; oat straw, \$1.60 to 1.70.

The wheat market has been against the bull operator during the past week, and it is considered remarkable that prices have declined more than they have. A decline of several cents a bushel was caused in St. Louis by the financial disturbance there. This was supplemented by a material increase in

farm offerings of spring wheat, with a larger movement expected. Even with normal conditions an expending movement brings little comfort to bulls, but under present conditions, with exporters out of line, Argentine crop affairs in excellent shape, the Australian crop promising about 60,000,000 bushels, against only 12,400,000 bushels last year, with about half of it available for export, and Russia shipping freely every week, it becomes especially discouraging.

The explanation is given of the late continuous very heavy Russian wheat exports, that the grain trade there is largely in the hands of Armenians and other aliens, and just as long as there is danger of war, there is possibility of their grain stocks being seized and their having to wait several years for payment, so that there is a strenuous effort being made to get grain stocks shipped as soon as possible.

It is worthy of note that with one-third of the crop year gone, the American wheat visible of 22,500,000 bushels is 7,500,000 bushels less than last year, 18,000,000 bushels less than two years ago, 27,000,000 bushels less than three years ago, and 26,000,000 bushels less than the past 16 years' average; and that these radical decreases promise to become even greater as the period of maximum figures in latter part of December draws nearer.

### VEST'S FEAT OF MEMORY.

Ex-Senator Quoted Letter Received Many Years Ago Without Mistake.

Senator Francis M. Cockrell was recently asked as to the health of former Senator George O. Vest, writes the Washington correspondent of the St. Louis Republic. He said that physically Senator Vest's condition is very bad, but that his splendid mind is unclouded by the afflictions of the flesh. Mr. Vest is engaged in the preparation of a number of articles for publication and dictates for hours each day to a stenographer on important historical events of the past.

Not long ago Senator Vest was dictating, Senator Cockrell said, and reached a point where it was necessary to quote a letter received many years ago. Without referring to the letter, which he had not seen for a number of years, he dictated it from memory.

Members of his family were so interested in the feat that they looked up the letter and found that Mr. Vest had quoted it literally and without the slightest mistake.

### POOR TIPS MIX UP BARBER.

He Takes Satisfaction in German For Morgan and Gates.

Members of the Chicago board of trade are telling an amusing story on Johnnie Schack, who lives "by the port" site out," says the Chicago Inter Ocean. He went into the barber shop in the board building the other day to have the "fuz scraped off," and he saluted the barber in German.

The barber did not catch him when he said:

"Guten morgen. Wie gehts?"

It was evidently an off day with the barber, who was thinking of the money he had dropped in stock, and he replied:

"To — with Morgan and Gates! I've tried to follow their tips and am up against it."

### Yells at the White House.

The members of the Wisconsin Press association recently called on the president at Washington and were presented by Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Taylor. The newspaper men were enthusiastic over their greeting from the president and held a sort of ratification meeting in the executive office as though Mr. Roosevelt had already been renominated and elected, says the Chicago Inter Ocean. They gave the college yell of the University of Wisconsin and three cheers and a tiger for the president. It was the liveliest reception that has been held in the president's office since Mr. Roosevelt returned from Oyster Bay.

### Consumption In Africa.

Consumption was unknown to the Africans until it was introduced by slave traders and colonists, but it is now more frequent and deadly than in America.

### Liquid Hydrogen.

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